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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2009

In Today's Papers

Debates Continue on 'Kurdish Initiative'
Media outlets continue reporting about the ongoing controversy and debates regarding the ruling AKP government's 'Kurdish Initiative.' Last week, MHP leader Bahceli had lashed out at the National Security Council's (MGK) approval of the continuation of the government efforts to find a settlement to the Kurdish question. President Gul has invited Bahceli to the presidential palace for a meeting, but the MHP leader turned down the call. Monday papers report the AKP deputy group chief Bekir Bozdag said MHP was accusing all with "treason" at a time when the President, Prime Minister, the government, and MGK was working to help the initiative which aims peace, security and happiness in the country. "What the MHP has been doing is not nationalism but racism. Why is the MHP uneasy with the efforts seeking peace, could it be out of fear that there will be no more martyrs' funerals for the MHP to abuse?" asked Bozdag. MHP Secretary General Cihan Pacaci underlined the importance of Turkey's unity, and said the "process" was one in which the PKK's demands were discussed. "The MHP will not even discuss this process -- that's why we didn't meet with the Interior Minister and the President," said Pacaci. CHP deputy chairman Onur Oymen said a "model" wanted by the U.S. for Turkey and the AKP government's policies "overlapped." "It's interesting that for the first time, the MGK did not mention the continuation of a 'determined fight against the PKK.' It means they've abandoned fighting, but will continue it through negotiations," emphasized Oymen. The pro-Kurdish DTP deputy group chief Selahattin Demirtas said what the MHP opposed was a democratic solution to the problem. "MHP opposes democratization and peace. We do not support the AKP but only the peace process. At the time being, CHP and MHP want war," said Demirtas.

Two Revised Laws for the Kurdish Opening

Mainstream Vatan reports that the government is in preparation to launch legal steps to advance its democratic move. The AKP government revises the repentance law and public reform bill in order to renew them. Article 221 of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK) says that those who set up, lead, become a member of an illegal organization and aid or commit offense in name of such organization, will not be punished if they surrender to security forces and give

information about illegal organization on their free will. The government decided to revise this bill because it is believed that the arrangement was not effective and that the government had to make arrangements to help the integration of former terrorists with the society. The Public Reform Law, which was vetoed by former President Sezer in 2004, will also be revised. This bill was suggesting shrinkage in the state's authorities and transferring the authority from the central government to local administrations.

Editorials on the Debates on the Kurdish Initiative

Ferai Tinc wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "Contrary to the arguments by some, developments in Iraq invalidate the belief that Turkey's Kurdish initiative was imposed by foreign powers like the U.S. Some in Turkey tend to argue that the U.S. wants to see a solution to the Kurdish problem because it affects Iraq's stability. As the chaotic situation in Iraq grows even more serious than before, it may be more difficult for the U.S. to implement the current plans to withdraw. Along with Shiite and Sunni tension, Iraq has more serious potential problems including Kirkuk's status and tension between Arabs and Kurds. Turkey has to resolve its Kurdish issue because it is an internal problem to address. In the meantime, Ankara needs to develop a security plan based on developments in Iraq."

Ali Bulac wrote in Islamist Zaman: "Turkey certainly has to find ways to address the Kurdish problem on its own. Yet at the same

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time, this issue has obtained a regional nature ever since the invasion of Iraq with the involvement of U.S., Europe and several countries in the region and we cannot simply ignore that."

Mehmet Tezkan wrote in mainstream Vatan: "By reading the recent statements from DTP as well as from the government, one cannot help but wonder about the serious inconsistencies regarding the approach.

The government characterization is advancing democratic standards countrywide just like they like to call the current efforts as a democratic initiative. As for the DTP figures, democratic steps are not enough and results can only be achieved by negotiation with the PKK and its leader directly or indirectly. If these approaches remain as they are, it will require optimism to expect something concrete out of this process."

Chief Prosecutor Finds 'No Links' Between Deniz Feneri-AKP (Haberturk)

Mainstream Haberturk reported on Sunday that following an investigation that has lasted two and a half months, the chief prosecutor has decided there was no concrete proof of links between the Germany-based Islamist Deniz Feneri charity and the ruling AK Party, dropping charges that the AK Party was receiving financial aid from foreign organizations. According to article 69 of the Turkish Constitution, political parties are prohibited to accept aid from foreign states, international organizations and individuals who are not Turkish citizens. Three Turks from the administration of Deniz Feneri charity in Germany have been convicted for "fraud" for collecting donations totaling 41 million Euros, out of which 17 million Euros have been transferred to Turkey. The investigation of the chief prosecutor against the AK Party has concluded, but Ankara prosecutor is still probing the links of the Deniz Feneri charity with the suspects in Ankara, says Haberturk.

Hakkari Governor To Be Appointed MGK Secretary General (Bugun)
Conservative-nationalist Bugun says the AKP government, aiming to advance the civilianization of the National Security Council (MGK), will hand over the post of MGK Secretary General to a governor. Hakkari governor Muammer Turker is the strongest candidate for the post.

Erdogan to Participate in G-20 Pittsburgh Summit in September
Monday's mainstream Haberturk reports Prime Minister Erdogan will participate in the G-20 Summit that will be held in Pittsburgh on September 24-25, which will discuss the global economic crisis.

Erdogan is expected to meet with President Obama during his four-day visit to the U.S., says Haberturk.

Editorial on Obama's Health Care Plan

Omer Taspinar wrote in mainstream Sabah: "Unlike developments in Iraq and Afghanistan, Americans are more focused and debating on the Obama administration's health care plan. President Obama is trying to achieve what President Clinton tried and failed to do 16 years ago. This is a tough period for Obama because the anti-reform lobby is very alive in the U.S. again. This is a leadership test for President Obama with all the risks as he tries to achieve something against the no-additional-tax lobbies and pro status quo lobbies which make about the half of the country."

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- On August 24-25, the Friends of Democratic Pakistan meeting will be held in Istanbul with the participation of Richard Holbrooke, the U.S. Special Envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan.

- On August 27, Turkmenistan's Head of State Gurbanguli Berdimuhamedov will pay a state visit to Turkey. Berdimuhamedov will meet with President Abdullah Gul in Antalya.

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- Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek said "dialogue" with the IMF continued, adding the sides were discussing the amount of funds to be given to Turkey.

- A draft bill on judicial reform will be discussed at Monday's meeting of the Council of Ministers.

- Collective bargaining talks between the government and the labor unions will be continued on Monday.

World

- On August 27-28, NATO Secretary General Andres Fogh Rasmussen will visit Turkey to meet with President Abdullah Gul and Prime Minister Erdogan.

- Eight years after the September 11, 2001 attacks, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen says al-Qaeda remains "very capable" of attacking the U.S.

- Armenian Americans community representatives sent a letter to Secretary Clinton, expressing their concern about the unfair and inaccurate statements of OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Matthew Bryza.

- Israeli PM Netanyahu has asked the Swedish government to condemn an article in Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet saying that Israeli troops harvested the organs of the Palestinians they killed.

SILLIMAN